

The Pork-BolTeR



ISSUE 87, August 2008

FREE/DONATION

Shock privatisation of Worthing town centre

WHEN a group of Porkbolter supporters set off on a tongue-in-cheek celebratory tour of Worthing's CCTV cameras on Saturday June 28, little did they know where it would lead.

A few days later they were all over the local press, regional TV and national radio, after town centre wardens approached them to tell them they were "not allowed to take photographs in a public place".

Although a video of the incident was seen by tens of thousands of people, a town official unbelievably still tried to pretend it all hadn't happened, or that it was somehow our fault (see 'Town Liar', page 2). But the incident has also sparked off a lot of other questions.

Who are these 'town centre wardens' anyway? Who employs them? What's it all about? While the exact identity of the wardens remains a bit of a mystery (see *story right*), we have seen the bigger picture and it is not a pretty one, involving the **privatisation of all public space in the heart of our town**.

The whole of Worthing town centre from Heene Road to near the Aquarena, as far north as Shelley Road and Brighton Road, plus the area around the town hall, library and law courts (see www.worthingtowncentre.co.uk/docs/bid_map.pdf) has been turned into something called a *Business Improvement District*,

★ Exclusive ★

or *BID*, for an initial five-year period. This has been quietly hatched over the last few years, leading up to the official launch on April 1 (*April Fool's Day!*), after which the town wardens were unleashed as part of the scheme.

While the *Town Centre Initiative*, which runs the BID, claims that the wardens' role is to prevent crime and act as 'ambassadors' for the town, it is clear that something more sinister is going on. The BID Business Plan reveals the Worthing wardens are expected to "deter illegal street trading and leafleting" and "discourage youths gathering around the bandstand".

So is it an offence to meet your friends in the town centre if you are under a certain age? Are they claiming leafleting is illegal? (*it is expressly permitted, if political or religious*).

Combined with the attitude displayed by the wardens on our photo outing, it is clear that their role is the sanitisation of the town centre, to clear away anyone who gets in the way of the only thing that matters to the business cliques that own everything these days – people spending their money in shops.

Continued overleaf



Security firm and the office with no name

AS IF Worthing did not enough jobsworths in uniforms, from *PCSOs* to *parking attendants*, we now have the Burgundy Boys, aka the town centre wardens (*in action above*).

As we found out recently, they are based at 1 Liverpool Terrace, right on Holder's Corner. However, there is nothing on the door to say they are to be found there, which is odd.

They appear to have no actual powers and nobody knows quite where they come from.

A photo in the *Worthing Herald* on June 5 showed them alongside kickboxing instructor Nick Brewer and his chum (*continued over*)

Create your own town centre warden photo album!

Now that it has been established that it is NOT illegal to take photos of the town wardens, we want everyone to share in the photo fun! Here we print part one of a collectable Photo Album on which you can stick your own pics of the Burgundy Boys. They wouldn't tell us their names, so we've had to make some up. Part two of the album will follow in the next issue – if we can be bothered. **So what's keeping you? Get out there and get snapping!**



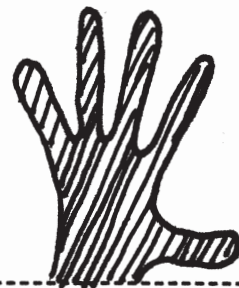
Mongoose



Slinky



Oily



Clueless

Sharon Clarke - the Town Liar!

EVEN more insulting than the thuggish behaviour of the town wardens in the photo ban incident was the response in the media from town manager Sharon Clarke, who has now earned the alternative job title of **Town Liar!**

At least Matt Mitchell, who was told he “**could be a terrorist**” because he took photos of the police station in Chatsworth Road (*Worthing Herald*, July 3), later got a full apology from the cops. But Sharon was not big enough to do the same for us, and instead decided to throw a bit of mud in our direction.

She told the *Worthing Herald* we had been “threatening and intimidating”. The *BBC* reported she told them we had “blocked shop doorways and disturbed an arts events” but also that “the main problem was that the campaigners were taking photographs of the wardens’ faces”. However, she told *The Argus*: “The photographers were asked not to take close-up photos of another group using the area, who had become distressed.” If you’re going to tell fibs, you might as well get your story

Town privatisation exposed

(continued) This is a scenario more normally associated with American-style private shopping malls - and this is no coincidence. The documents detailing the BID project complain that Worthing town centre has to compete against closed shopping malls in the region - the BID’s answer is to grab our public space and turn it into what is effectively a private outdoor mall.

An informative article in online resource *Wikipedia* explains that BIDs were first launched in the USA and Canada in the 1960s and modelled on the idea of a “**suburban shopping mall**”. It adds that there are fears that the process “**privatizes the public spaces of the city**” and favours business interests over public good. It adds: “There has also been substantial attention to the manner in which BIDs have often attempted to rid the spaces they control of the homeless (who by definition must be in public space since they do not own any private spaces), ethnic minorities and political activists who might frighten off potential shoppers.” *Sound familiar?*

A look at Worthing BID website (www.worthingbid.co.uk) confirms the corporate connection, with the bodies thanked for setting out the government’s BID guidelines including bosses’ organisation the *CBI*, the *British Retail Association*, *Boots plc*, the *British Property Federation*, the *Forum of Private Businesses* and *Sainsbury’s Property Company*. There was particular support from *Groundwork*, a pseudo-environmental organisation (headed by property developer Bob Lawson, chairman of *Barratt Developments plc*) which boasts the smug and vomit-inducing motto “people, places, prosperity”.

The Worthing BID Business Plan refers to negotiations with “various bodies including SEEDA, AIF, developers, landowners” and other businesses for more funding. SEEDA is the *South East England Development Agency*, a powerful unelected quango working towards the privatisation of everything (see also issue 83 on education). AIF (Area Investment Framework) is now called the *Coastal West Sussex Partnership* and part of the same public-funded business mafia. As for developers and landowners, it is worth noting that the BID is also linked in with the controversial *Masterplan* for redeveloping Worthing town centre which, as we explained in August 2006, aims to “make the town a more successful and attractive place to live, work and invest”. ‘Invest’ is defined in our dictionary as “to lay out money or capital with the expectation of profit” - **profit at our expense, of course!**

So how did Worthing BID get away with taking our town centre from us? In documents we found on the web, the Town Centre Initiative claims the BID is “representative”. By this it means that it had to get it approved by a vote of commercial premises with a rateable value of £10,000 or more in the zone before it could go ahead, because they are paying a 1% business tax levy to fund it, and they continue to have a say.*

But of course they **didn’t ask** the tens of thousands of people who live in the BID area, let alone everyone else in Worthing with a right to enjoy public space in our town centre to do whatever we want, within the law - such as take photos, hand out newsletters or just hang out with friends! **There is only one word for taking something belonging to someone else without their permission - and that word is theft!**

* Even this business vote was bulldozed through, *The cover of the brochure sent out to encourage firms to vote for the BID declared ‘Vote Yes to Keep Worthing Sunny’ and ‘Vote Yes! Or do you want Worthing left out in the cold?’*. No hint of bias there, then!

www.eco-action.org/porkbolter

straight before you start, Sharon!

The truth is the photography group was only in Montague Place for a few minutes and there was no sign of any arts event to disrupt. The only arts group there that day has confirmed to us that it did not complain. The wardens marched over, demanded we stop taking photos and then acted aggressively, using powers they don’t have to physically try and grab a megaphone. We are due one apology for the incident and another for the lies that followed! **More details on all this can be found on our website at www.eco-action.org/porkbolter.**

Security firm and wardens

(continued) Mike O’Hagan, directors of *Max Security*, with no explanation as to what the link was. Our research found several firms with near-identical names, but there is a Max Security registered at 1 Liverpool Terrace, though again there is no nameplate outside. It also has an address at Unit 8, Northbrook Trading Estate, Northbrook Road, Worthing. Its illustrious clients include McDonald’s, Worthing Borough Council and Sussex Police.

One firm that is listed outside 1 Liverpool Terrace is *Purple Oak IT Limited* - which happens to have created the Max Security website (www.max-security.co.uk). Max Security Ltd and Purple Oak IT Ltd both show up on a Companies House search as being overdue with their accounts and thus liable for a hefty fine. Purple Oak also shares its company registration number and VAT code with various other IT firms with names like *Offsite Back-up* and *Support Desk*, but no doubt this is all completely above board...

If you have any info on the wardens or what they’ve been up to, please contact us in confidence at porkbolter@eco-action.org

Pork-scratchings

WORTHING Alliance continues to meet the last Thursday of every month upstairs at The Rest in Bath Place, Worthing (off Montague Street) Next dates are August 28 and September 25. All are welcome.

* * *

WE WERE very sorry to hear of the death on June 18 of **Ray Little**, from Durrington, a long-time Porkbolter subscriber and active supporter of the campaign to save Titmore Woods.

* * *

A POSSIBLE new *Asda* at Norwich Union’s Broadwater HQ and a definite new *Tesco Express* in South Farm Road. Just what Worthing needs - a load more porkin’ supermarkets! Meanwhile, what we don’t need is community facilities, according to West Sussex County Council, which wants to effectively close the popular *Sidney Walter Centre* in Sussex Road. Residents are up in arms and ready to fight!

* * *

WE HAVE to share this example of bureaucrat-speak, submitted by a reader from a *Worthing Borough Council* document called ‘Think Tank Minutes’: “It was agreed that the LSP Think Tank Concept Screening tool needed some modification: the concept merit attribute ‘Realistically achievable’ should have greater weighting, similar to that for ‘Fit with Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) outcomes’, and consideration should be given as to whether a partner was available. Nevertheless, the opportunity to fly kites should remain open. It was also agreed that it would be an improvement if reasons were recorded for the scoring for each idea. A redraft of the screening tool is attached.” *No, none of us here have got a clue, either!*

Politics without politicians!

THE PORKBOLTER is an independent newsletter that has nothing to do with any political party or politician - but we do have a political aim, which is to fight for democracy and freedom and oppose the take-over of our town and our world by the increasingly totalitarian power of big money. To get the next six issues through the post send a donation of £3 or more payable to The Porkbolter at PO Box 4144, Worthing BN14 7NZ. You can also pick up a copy at Revolutionary Records in Warwick Lane, Warwick Street, Worthing. Or read it on the website at www.eco-action.org/porkbolter, which also includes a regularly updated events section. We also run an email list, which you can join via porkbolter@eco-action.org.

porkbolter@eco-action.org